

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 27, 2011

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 4, 2011

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1167

Introduced by Assembly Member Fong
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Fuentes)

February 18, 2011

An act to add Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8260) to Division 8 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to homelessness.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1167, as amended, Fong. Homelessness: Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Under existing law, several agencies have prescribed responsibilities relating to homeless persons including, among others, administering emergency shelter programs and ensuring the provision of community mental health services for homeless persons.

This bill would create the California Interagency Council on Homelessness. This bill would provide that the council be composed of specified members and would require the council to hold public meetings at least once every quarter. This bill would authorize the council to perform various activities, including acting as the lead for coordinating and planning the state's response to homelessness and would require the council to seek all available federal funding for purposes of funding the council and its activities.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) California has the highest rate of homelessness and the
4 highest ratio of homeless people per resident, with 360,000 people
5 sleeping on the streets or in shelters on any given night.

6 (b) Homelessness is traumatic for those who suffer it, often
7 leading to separated families, exacerbation of health conditions, a
8 rise in avoidable emergency room use, social and academic delays
9 among children, and greater likelihood of incarceration.

10 (c) Many people who lack permanent shelter and the ability to
11 access regular support ricochet through separate and expensive
12 public systems: overburdened corrections systems, overcrowded
13 hospital emergency rooms, mental health programs, substance
14 abuse treatment and detox facilities, shelters, and emergency
15 housing. As a result, people experiencing chronic homelessness
16 use a disproportionate share of state and local services.

17 (d) Innovative approaches across the nation and within
18 California show promise for reducing homelessness and the
19 resulting impact on state services.

20 (e) Changing the system and reducing homelessness requires
21 coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local
22 governments, as well as private sector organizations.

23 (f) Creation of a statewide coordinating council is an important
24 and effective tool in supporting initiatives to end homelessness in
25 California.

26 (g) Creation of a statewide coordinating council will stem
27 avoidable costs of maintaining the number of homeless persons
28 and will, therefore, result in reducing avoidable costs to multiple
29 programs.

30 (h) Homelessness affects multiple systems in California at a
31 very high public cost, including housing, mental health and
32 substance abuse, education, corrections, foster care, health care,
33 and veterans services. Reducing homelessness would produce cost
34 savings for all these systems. The state adopted a Ten-Year Chronic
35 Homelessness Action Plan in February 2010, but has no mechanism
36 in place to assess progress or hold state agencies accountable to
37 the action steps in the plan. A codified, structured interagency
38 council on homelessness would help fill this gap.

(i) In November 2005, Governor Schwarzenegger created the Governor's Chronic Homelessness Initiative, which included plans to form an interagency coordinating council to reduce homelessness. The Business, Transportation and Housing Agency's 2005–10 Consolidated Plan further indicates the importance of an interagency council on homelessness. Despite these intentions, a council has not met regularly or publicly since the Governor adopted his Chronic Homelessness Initiative.

(j) California must give priority to developing consolidated, coordinated, and cooperative approaches to issues of homelessness, including, but not limited to, specific issues addressing homeless youth, families, veterans, parolees, victims of domestic violence, people with substance abuse or other mental health disorders, people experiencing chronic homelessness, seniors, and disabled people.

(k) Working within current costs, a revitalized Interagency Council on Homelessness will reduce duplication of efforts and the costs of homelessness and will redirect resources to more effective approaches, developing a more integrated system and eliminating fragmentation. Other states have created interagency councils without initial investment of resources.

(l) California is not accessing all of the federal funds for homelessness that it should due to a lack of coordination among some agencies. Application for these funds could total millions of dollars, and requires state agency collaboration.

SEC. 2. Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8260) is added to Division 8 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

CHAPTER 7. CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON
HOMELESSNESS

8260. For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "Council" means the California Interagency Council on Homelessness.

(b) "Stakeholder organization" means a nonprofit or faith-based organization whose primary mission is to prevent or end homelessness, to provide services or health care to people who are homeless, or to create housing for people who are homeless.

1 8261. (a) There is hereby created in state government the
2 California Interagency Council on Homelessness with a mission
3 to construct cross-agency and community cooperation in
4 responding to homelessness, and to identify and apply for increased
5 federal funding to respond to homelessness.

6 (b) The Governor shall designate a lead agency or representative
7 from the Governor's staff to direct the work of the council.

8 (c) The council shall seek all available federal funding for
9 purposes of funding the council and its activities.

10 (d) Membership of the council shall include all of the following:

11 (1) At least one representative with decisionmaking authority
12 from each of the following:

13 (A) The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

14 (B) The Department of Housing and Community Development.

15 (C) The State Department of Mental Health.

16 (D) The State Department of Social Services.

17 (E) The Department of Veterans Affairs.

18 (2) Two representatives among local law enforcement, county
19 or city government, or organizations representing these interests.

20 One representative appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules,
21 and one representative appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.

22 (3) Representatives of two stakeholder organizations, with one
23 to be appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the other to
24 be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

25 (4) Two people who have experienced homelessness, with one
26 to be appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the other to
27 be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

28 (e) The council may, at its discretion, invite stakeholders, people
29 who have experienced homelessness, members of philanthropic
30 communities, and experts to participate in meetings or provide
31 information to the council.

32 (f) The Governor shall appoint a chairperson and vice
33 chairperson from among, or in addition to, the members of the
34 council specified in subdivision (d). Within current costs or with
35 private support, the council may establish working groups, task
36 forces, or other structures from within its membership or with
37 outside members to assist it in its work. Working groups, task
38 forces, or other structures established by the council shall determine
39 their own meeting schedules.

1 (g) Members of the council shall serve without compensation,
2 except that consumer representatives shall receive minimal
3 compensation if private funds are available. State funds shall not
4 be used to compensate members of the council.

5 8262. (a) The council shall hold public meetings at least once
6 every quarter.

7 (b) The council may, but is not required to, do both of the
8 following:

9 (1) Act as the lead for coordinating and planning the state's
10 response to homelessness, including identifying federal funding
11 sources and determining how the state ~~applies~~ *should apply* for
12 these resources.

13 (2) Engage or accept the services of agency personnel and
14 nonprofit organizations, or employ council staff to operate, manage,
15 or conduct the business of the council, only if these services are
16 provided by private, philanthropic, or other nonstate funding
17 resources available for that purpose or the Legislature makes a
18 future appropriation for that purpose.

19 8263. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the council
20 shall operate within the current budget of each department and
21 agency represented. Each department and agency shall cooperate
22 with the council and furnish it with information and assistance that
23 is necessary or useful to further the purposes of this chapter.